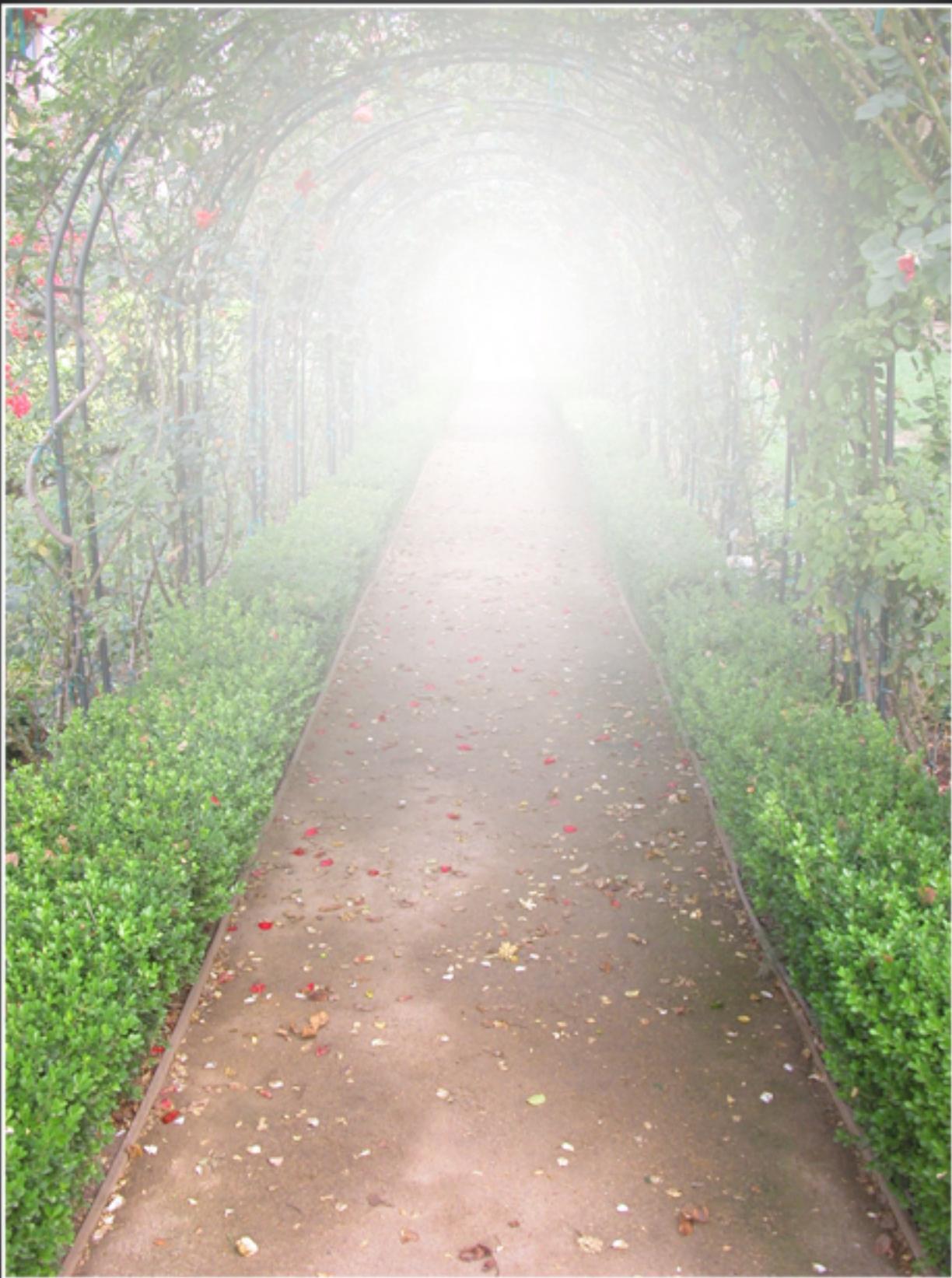


# The Straight Path



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## Introduction

All praise is due to Allaah<sup>1</sup>. Lord of all the worlds. May He send blessings upon Muhammed, the seal of the prophets, also upon his family, his companions, and whosoever follows his guidance until the day of judgement.

Throughout the course of human history, Allaah has sent 124,000 prophets to every community/nation, in order to establish the universal message of monotheism.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Allaah’ is a contraction of the Arabic words ‘Al-Ilaah’, which means ‘the one true God’. Corresponding to Hebrew ‘Eloah’

### **Chamber’s dictionary of etymology: Page 24**

Regarding ‘Allaah’ In one form or another this Hebrew root occurs in all Semitic languages as a designation of the Divinity;

### **New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia**

ALLAH...The term is a contraction of the Arabic al-ilah, "the God." Both the idea and the word existed in pre-Islamic Arabian tradition, in which some evidence of a primitive monotheism can also be found. Although they recognized other, lesser gods, the pre-Islamic Arabs recognized Allah as the supreme God.

### **Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2000**

Archaeological, linguistic, and non-Arabic data support the view that there were among the Arabs, long before the emergence of Islam, worshipers of a supreme god known as Allah...leaves little doubt that the Meccans, despite their idolatry, recognized that Allah was Creator and Supreme Provider...Allah was recognized as a High God to whom the inhabitants of the desert and the townsfolk turned in all great difficulties. Two pagan bards, Nabighah and Labid, used the name "Allâh" in connection with the Supreme Deity, while the so-called Hanifs, in their search for an acceptable religion, rejected polytheism and sought freedom from sin by appeal to the will of Allah.

### **Collier’s CD-ROM Encyclopedia**

The Bible claims Jesus allegedly said ‘Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani’ **My God!** **My God!** Why have you forsaken me!

### **Mark 15:34/Matthew 27:46**

The Pshitta (Aramaic version of the New Testament) claims Jesus allegedly said ‘Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see **Alaha**’

### **Pshitta: Sixth Beatitude**

One of the earliest translations of the word ‘Allaah’ is a Greek transcript from 705 – 715 AD which states ‘**Ho Theos Monos**’ (literally; ‘The One God’).

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**“Verily We have sent a messenger to every community (proclaiming) worship Allah alone and avoid the worship of other than Him. ... Travel throughout the land and see the destruction that befell those who denied the messengers and disbelieved.”**

{Qu’ran (16): 36}

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**“Verily We have sent Messengers before you. Some of their stories we have narrated to you and some of their stories we have not related to you. A sign was not given to any messenger except by the Leave of Allah...”**

{Qur'an (40): 78}

**“To every people there was a guide.”**

{Qur'an (7):13}

Prophet Muhammed, (sallallaahu `alayhi wa salam) said, **“There was never a prophet before me except that it was his duty to guide his nation towards every good he knew and warn them about any evil he knew.”<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Muslim 3:1025 no. 4546: Ibn Maajah & An- Nasaa’ee

Prophet Muhammed (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa salam) said, “**The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.**”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ahmad 2:406; Abu Dawud 4324 and at Tabari vol. 9, hadeeth no.388

## **Chapter One**

### **The Universal Message**

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**“True guidance has been made  
clear and distinct from falsehood.”**  
(Qur'an 2:256)

## The Earliest Human Society

Monotheism is a primordial belief, which originated with our common ancestors Adam<sup>4</sup> and his wife Eve<sup>5</sup>.

**"I created all my servants upon the true Religion."<sup>6</sup>**

Prophet Muhammed, (sallallaahu `alayhi wa salam<sup>7</sup>), said,  
**"Every child is born upon Al-Fitrah<sup>8</sup>."<sup>9</sup>**

Monotheism remained intact throughout the first ten generations of Adam's ('alayhis salam)<sup>10</sup> descendants

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<sup>4</sup> Arabic: Aadam Hebrew: Adam; literally, '**The one formed from the ground**' derived from the Hebrew noun '**Adamah**' literally '**Ground**'. Prophet Adam was the first man created by God

**"Verily, the similitude of Jesus before God is similar to that of Adam; Allah created him from dust, and then Allah said to him: "Be!". And he was."**  
{3:59}

<sup>5</sup> Arabic: Hawwah Hebrew: Hawwah; literally '**A living being**'. Muhammad Ibn Jarir At - Tabari said she was named 'Hawwah' because she was created from a living thing.

The Judeo – Christian view singles out Eve as being solely responsible for the decent of humanity, consequently this lead to the earlier view that all women are 'the devil's gateway' and 'inheritors of Eve's sinful behavior', as a result they are be subjected and suffer the pangs of childbirth.. The Islamic view is Adam and Eve both erred, both repented and both were forgiven.

<sup>6</sup> Saheeh Muslim 4:219

<sup>7</sup> Eng. Trans. **'May Allaah bestow peace and blessings upon him'**

<sup>8</sup> 'Al-Fitrah' 'Instinct/Natural/Disposition' Mankind was created with a natural inclination towards exclusive monotheistic belief. 'Al-Fitrah' enables us to feel that there is something perfect, which is greater and loftier than we are. Human beings are born into this natural state without any external influences or indoctrination. However our social environments have an immense effect on the condition of 'Al-Fitrah'.

<sup>9</sup> Fath Al - Bari 3:290 and Muslim 4:2047

<sup>10</sup> Eng. Trans. **'Peace be upon him'**

Ibn 'Abbaas (radiallaahu 'anhu) said, "**Between Prophet Noah and Adam were ten generations. All of them were upon the way of the truth.**"<sup>11</sup>

Non – Islamic sources have also constructed paradigms that are remarkably similar to the Islamic worldview. Wilhelm Schmidt's (1868–1954) *The Origin of the Idea of God* published in 1921 stated that originally there was a primitive monotheism before humans began to worship a number of gods. Initially, human beings acknowledged one supreme deity, who created the world and governed human affairs from afar. Anthropologists refer to this deity as the 'high' or 'sky' God because He is believed to dwell above them. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* states,

**"The sky-god has reigned everywhere; his kingdom still covers the whole of the uncivilized world. No historical or proto-historical motive can be assigned as a cause, and neither the migrations of races nor the diffusion of myths and folk-lore affords the slightest justification of the fact. The universality of the sky-god and the uniformity of his essential characteristics are the logical consequences of the constant uniformity of the primitive system of cosmogony."**<sup>12</sup>

Anthropologist Mircea Eliade 1907 – 1986) wrote regarding the universal belief of God's loftiness,

**"The supreme divinity of the Maori is named 'Iho'; 'ihoh' means elevated, high up. 'Uwoluwu', the supreme god of the Akposo Negroes, signifies what is on high. The Sky God of the Yoruba of the Slave Coast is named 'Olorun', literally 'Owner of the Sky'. The Samoyad worship Num, a god who dwells in the highest sky. Among the Koryak, the supreme divinity is called the One on High, the Master of the High, He Who Exists. The Ainu know him as the Divine Chief of the Sky, the Sky God, the Divine Creator of the Worlds, but also as Kamui, that is, Sky. The list could be easily extended."**<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> At – Tabari 4:275

<sup>12</sup> Volume 11, p.580, 'Sky Gods, Universality and Antiquity' 13 Vols.

<sup>13</sup> Islam affirms the universal belief in God's loftiness; The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa salam) said, "**Be merciful to those on earth, so that the One above the heavens will be merciful to you.**" (Reported in Bukhaari/Muslim)

## The Primary Belief

Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853 –1942) stated in 1908

**“Were the conception of god only an evolution from spirit worship we should find the worship of many gods...What we actually find is contrary to this...Monotheism is the first stage traceable in theology.”**

Ancient Mesopotamia<sup>14</sup> is considered as ‘the cradle of civilisation’. The discovery of cuneiforms containing references to thousands of gods, confirmed that Mesopotamian culture was extremely polytheistic. However, archaeologists discovered earlier cuneiforms that proved the amounts of gods were significantly reduced. The initial discoveries of thousands of gods were gradually reduced to three to six deities. Oxford cuneiform scholar Stephen Herbert Langdon (1876-1937) concluded that ‘**man rapidly declined from monotheism to extreme polytheism**’<sup>15</sup>

The Vedas<sup>16</sup> are a large series of writings originating in Ancient India. They are considered to be one of the integral scriptural foundations of Hinduism. Friedrich Max Müller (1823 – 1900) wrote in *The History of Sanskrit Literature*

**“There is a monotheism which preceded the polytheism of the Veda and even in the invocation of innumerable gods the remeberence of a god breaks**

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<sup>14</sup> An area comprising of modern Iraq, eastern Syria, and southeastern Turkey.

• Ancient Mesopotamia is taken to include the period from the late 4th millennium BC until the rise of the Achaemenids in the 6th century BC.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Langdon, ‘*Mythology of All Races*’, Vol. 5 in journal *Semitic Mythology*

<sup>16</sup> Historians regard the Vedas as some of the oldest surviving texts in the world, they estimate them to have been written down between 2500 and 500 BCE.

**through the midst of idolatrous phraseology like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds.”**

## **Alternative Views on the Origin of Religion**

The earliest theories of the origin of religion were first formed when the first travelers ventured outside their own clans or villages and discovered that their neighbors had other gods with different names. The ancient historian Herodotus<sup>17</sup> (484 BCE – 425 BCE) tried to explain that the gods Amon and Horus, whom he encountered in Egypt, were the equivalent of Zeus and Apollo in his native Greece. Later the writer Euhemerus (330 – 260) claimed that the gods were simply outstanding personages from history who began to be worshipped after their death.

The theorising about the origin of all religions remained dormant until the age of enlightenment. Rather than explain the origin of all religions, philosophers believed they could explain *away* all religions. The circularity of their arguments were troubling, since all of the philosophers presupposed atheism, this prompts them to offer explanations of why perfectly intelligent human beings should think that there is a God to believe in. Yet when it is all said and done, these explanations of religious belief start out from atheist premises and duly arrive at atheist conclusions.

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<sup>17</sup> Herodotus (484 BCE – 425 BCE) is almost exclusively known for writing *The Histories*, a collection of stories about the places and peoples he encountered during his wide-ranging travels around the Mediterranean littoral and into Mesopotamia. During his journeys he encountered the Pre – Islamic Arabs. He describes their adherence to a very crude form of polytheism

**“They believe in no other gods except Dionysus and the Heavenly Aphrodite; and they say that they wear their hair as Dionysus does his, cutting it round the head and shaving the temples. They call Dionysus, Orotalt; and Aphrodite, Alilat.”**

(Book 3 Chapter 8 *The Histories* Harvard University Press. 1920)

However Herodotus writes an account of an amazing characteristic of the Arabs, which has since become embodied within the spirit of Islam

**“There are no men who respect pledges more than the Arabians.”**

(Book 3 Chapter 8 *The Histories* Harvard University Press. 1920)

The influence of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* gave many of the earlier theories an 'evolutionist slant'. The evolutionist stance was central to the theories of E.B Tylor (1832 – 1917) and J.G Frazer (1854 – 1941). They asserted that human societies have gradually improved themselves; therefore, this should be reflected in their religious beliefs; so monotheism ought to be a later stage of thought than polytheism. However, Tylor and Frazer found it hard to respond to critics such as Wilhelm Schmidt, who pointed out the if monotheism was supposedly the 'higher' form of religion then why was it more common in the simpler cultures of people who hunted and gathered food than in the later advanced communities of those who farmed and kept herds of domestic animals?<sup>18</sup> Andrew Lang (1844 - 1912) wrote in *The Making of Religion*

**"Of all races now extant, the Australians are probably lowest in culture, and, like the fauna of the continent, are nearest to the primitive model. They have neither metals, bows, pottery, agriculture, nor fixed habitations; and no traces of higher culture have anywhere been found above or in the soil of the continent. This is important, for in some respects their religious conceptions are so lofty that it would be natural to explain them as the result either of a European influence, or as relics of a higher civilisation in the past. The former notion is discredited by the fact that their best religious ideas are imparted in connection with their ancient and secret mysteries, while for the second idea, that they are degenerated from a loftier civilisation, has absolutely no evidence."**

Leopold Pospisil's *The Kapauku Papuans of West Guinea* analyses the sophisticated belief system of the Kapauku Papuans. The Kapauku of New Guinea led aboriginal lives undisturbed by the spreading of western civilisation until 1938. Despite their simple lifestyle, their religious views were extremely advanced. They assert that 'Ugatame' created the universe, 'Ugatame' transcends space and time, and 'Ugatame' created and determined by both good and evil.

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel L Pals, *Seven Theories of Religion* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1996)

Leopold Pospisil documents an interesting account concerning the sophisticated theology of the Kapauku.

**"A very old man from the Mapia region, supported by his two sons, managed to come to see me in the Kamu valley. As he explained to me, his main purpose in coming was a problem he wanted to have clarified before he died. The problem concerned the white man. He could not understand how it is possible that the white man could be so clever and ingenious in designing such amazing contrivances as airplanes (which the old man could see flying over his valley), guns, medicines, clothes, and steel tools, and at the same time could be so primitive and illogical in his religion... (He asked) Why, if he (The Christian God) is omnipotent, did the Creator have to change himself into a man to allow himself to be killed (crucified) when it would have been enough for him just to order men to behave?... Furthermore, the Christian notion of man resembling God in appearance appeared to him as utterly primitive 'tabe-tabe' meaning stupid."**

The overconfident claims of the eighteenth and nineteenth philosophers (who proposed that religion could be reduced to a specific component) have generally been rejected.

Ninian Smart wrote in *The Religious Experience of Mankind*<sup>19</sup> exemplifies this view when he says; '**Neither can we know how man first experienced the holy.'**

Edward Evan Evans Pritchard states in the concluding pages of *Theories of Primitive Religion*

**"During the last century...general statements were indeed attempted...in the form of evolutionary and psychology and sociological hypotheses, but since these attempts at general formulations seem to have long been abandoned by anthropologists, our subject has suffered from loss of common aim and method."**

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<sup>19</sup> Collins: 1971

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Creation of Gods**

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**"Do you worship what you carve?  
Whilst Allaah has created you and  
what you make!"**  
(Qur'an 37: 95-96)

## The Emergence of Idolatry

The emergence of idolatry within the earliest human society was a gradual process and has since become the archetype for the corruption of most monotheistic traditions.

Wadd<sup>20</sup>, Suwaa<sup>21</sup>, Yaghooth<sup>22</sup>, Yaa'ooq<sup>23</sup> and Nasr<sup>24</sup> were a group of exemplary individuals who became distinguished for their acts of piety. They were widely respected and held in high regard by their community. After their subsequent deaths, the process of deification began with the production of images. These images were primarily used as visual aids to increase remembrance. Satan (Shaytaan) gradually manipulated each passing generation's admiration for their pious predecessors<sup>25</sup>. Eventually Wadd, Suwaa, Yahgooth, Yaa'ooq and Nasr were deified.

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<sup>20</sup> In pre-Islamic Arabia Wadd was worshipped by the Kalb tribe in the region of Dawmatul - Jandal

<sup>21</sup> In pre-Islamic Arabia Suwaa' was worshipped by the Hudhayl tribe

<sup>22</sup> In pre-Islamic Arabia 'Yaghooth' was worshipped by the Ghutayf tribe at Jurf near the region of Sabaa

<sup>23</sup> In pre-Islamic Arabia 'Ya'ooq' was worshipped by the Hamdaan tribe

<sup>24</sup> In pre-Islamic Arabia 'Nasr' was worshipped by the Dhul - Kalaa of the Himayr tribe

<sup>25</sup> In the Arabic language 'Shaytaan' is derived from 'Shatana' which means '**The far thing**'. Hence, the Shaytaan has a different nature than mankind, and his sinful ways are far away from every type of righteousness  
(Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Eng. Trans.) page 57

**"Shaytaan does not only observe the present generation, and seek to deceive only them; but he also wishes to misguide and deceive future generations. Thus, when he could not plunge the present generation, from**

Several anthropologists have produced numerous theories of how primordial religions of an exclusive ‘high god’ gradually degenerated in to a religion of many gods. Mircea Eliade’s (1907 – 1986) research concluded that the ‘high god’ was later perceived as too lofty and exalted therefore personalised gods were created to bridge the gap between the heavens and the worldly life. These personalised gods participated in the daily lives of human beings, ‘shared mankind’s sufferings’, and were often cultural personifications. Despite the high god’s perceived remoteness, he was never overlooked and was generally acknowledged as the chief deity<sup>26</sup>. He was supplicated to in times of great distress or as a last resort.<sup>27</sup>

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**the people of Nooh, into Shirk, he eagerly awaited the next generation's arrival, in order that he could misguide them.”**

See: Shaykh Saalih Al – Fawzaan, *Bayaan Haqeeqatut-Tawheed*, pp. 8-9

<sup>26</sup> The recognition of a ‘high god’ within most religious traditions is particular to Islam. Numerous Qura’nic verses indicate that the adherents of polytheistic traditions are aware of Him, but they obscure His worship with false deities.

**“If you ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and the earth? They would surely say, ‘Allaah! How then have they turned away (from the sole worship of Allaah)?”**

(Qur'an 42:87)

27 Several accounts of Pre - Islamic Arabian practices have verified this phenomenon. The pre – Islamic Arabs practiced a very crude form of polytheism, yet their concept of Allah remained exalted and free from anthropomorphic representations

**“Archaeological, linguistic, and non-Arabic data support the view that there were among the Arabs, long before the emergence of Islam, worshipers of a supreme god known as Allah... leaves little doubt that the Meccans, despite their idolatry, recognized that Allah was Creator and Supreme Provider... Allah was recognized as a High God to whom the inhabitants of the desert and the townsfolk turned in all great difficulties.”**

(Collier's CD-ROM Encyclopedia)

Ikrimah the son of Abi Jahl was traveling by sea when he and his shipmates encountered a ferocious storm. The people aboard the ship assumed they would all drown. So they told one another, “**Supplicate sincerely to Allaah for verily all your idols and other gods will be of no hope to you now!**” On hearing this Ikrimah said to himself, ‘**By Allaah! If Allaah can save us on the ocean when we pray sincerely to Him, then He must be the only One that can saves us on land as well! O Allaah! You have my word, that if you save me from the storm, I will definitely go to Muhammad, and put my hand in his hand, and I will find him to be forgiving and generous’.**

## **Historical Examples of the Creation of Personalised Gods**

### **The Distortion of Allaah's Attributes**

The concept of a supreme deity has occasionally suffered from alterations. Anthropomorphism<sup>28</sup> has crept in to religious text and various systems of belief. The anthropomorphism of a deity is a vain attempt to *humanise* god in order to make him more accessible and germane. A prime example is Judaism, whilst the godhead has remained singular; the concept of Yahweh has been severely distorted. Perhaps a key factor was the overwhelming effect of hellenization<sup>29</sup>. Many of the distortions are found in The Book of Genesis<sup>30</sup>, “**The LORD**

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Miraculously the boat was saved from ruin. Ikrimah fulfilled his promise to Allaah. He went see the prophet (sallaallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) and indeed, he found the prophet (sallaallaahu `alayhi wa sallam] to be forgiving and generous.

<sup>28</sup> Anthropomorphism refers to the perception of a deity in human form, or the recognition of human qualities present in non - human beings. A good example is the Greek gods of Mount Olympus were often depicted in human form exhibiting both commendable and despicable human traits.

<sup>29</sup> Hellenization (or Hellenisation) is a term used to describe a cultural change in which something non-Greek becomes Greek. The conquests of Alexander the Great (336–323 BC) led to the hellenization and colonisation of most of the known world. The conquering Greeks viewed their culture to be superior to all others, thus they vehemently spread their ideas amongst their colonies. The Greek language became the lingua franca of her colonies. The main educational institutes were Greek orientated. Greek gymnasiums and theatres were established throughout the colonies. Although the influx of Greek customs affected the Israelites much slower than the rest of the colonies, it had a massive cultural effect. The Israelites hellenized their names, style of dress, worldview and religious practices. The Old Testament was translated into Greek because many Jews could no longer speak their local dialect. By the time of Jesus' ('alayhis salam) arrival hellenisation was firmly entrenched within the Israelite communities.

<sup>30</sup> St Augustine (354 – 430), one of the most important figures in the development of Western Christianity, declared “**There is no way of preserving**

***was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain***” (Genesis 6:6) “**Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.**” (Genesis 3:8) “**By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.**”<sup>31</sup> (Genesis 3:3) The account of Jacob wrestling with God, in which he miraculously manages to overpower God (Genesis 32)<sup>32</sup>

### The Deification of Confucius<sup>33</sup>

Confucius (551BCE – 479 BCE) was a famous Chinese thinker and social commentator. His teachings are known primarily through ‘*The Analects of Confucius*’, a short collection of discussions with his disciples, which was compiled posthumously. A year after his death a temple was erected for his worship in his hometown of Qufu. Gradually his worship was institutionalised by the state and numerous temples were erected all over China. In due course Confucius’s disciples,

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**the first chapter of Genesis without impiety, and attributing things to God unworthy of Him”**

(*The Confessions of St. Augustine* and *City of God* (New York: Dorset Books, 1961)

<sup>31</sup> Compare with the Qur’anic verses “**Do they not see that Allaah created the heavens and the earth and was not wearied by their creation.**” (Qur'an 46:33)

**“Allaah! There is no god but He,-the Eternal, the One who sustains and protects all that exists. Neither sleep nor slumber overtakes Him.”** (Qur'an 2 :255)

<sup>32</sup> “**A common suggestion is that God is not God at all in this story but some sort of angel, possibly Uriel or Michael acting off his own bat. This is however contradicted by Jacob’s testimony, ‘I have seen God face to face and survived’.** A Christian compromise is reached by Matthew Henry (1662 – 1714) in his famous bible commentary: ‘The angel who wrestled with Jacob’, he wrote, **“was the second person in the sacred trinity, who was after the wrestling God manifested in the flesh, and who, dwelling in human nature, is called Immanuel.”** In other words it was Jesus who dislocated Jacob’s hip! Whatever next?”

(Andrew Waugh, *God* p.101)

<sup>33</sup> Transliterated **Kong Fuzi** or **K'ung-fu-tzu**, lit. "Master Kong"

descendants, and exemplary Confucian scholars underwent deification.

### **The Deification of Jesus ('alayhis salam)**

Jesus Son of Mary (Isa Ibn Maryam) is regarded as one of the greatest prophets of Allaah. Jesus' ('alayhis salam) message was particular to the children of Israel<sup>34</sup>. His prophetic teachings never deviated from 'The Shema'<sup>35</sup>. After the ascension of Jesus ('alayhis salam), accounts of his life spread from Palestine to the Mediterranean. The religion of Jesus ('alayhis salam) increasingly became the religion *about* Jesus. His proclamation of 'The Shema' was generally marginalised for discussions about his essence. Jesus ('alayhis salam) was eventually deified then positioned as the second deity within the trinity<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> The children of Israel (Arabic: Bani Isareel Hebrew B'nei Yisrael) is a qura'nic and biblical term referring to the Israelites. Jesus son of Mary ('alayhis salam) was sent to The Israelites because they had deviated from the Mosaic Law.

**And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him. We sent him the Gospel, therein was guidance, light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him.**

(Qur'an 5:46)

<sup>35</sup> 'The Shema' is a proclamation of the oneness of God, it is found in numerous passages of The Old Testament '**Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad.**' ("Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God! The Lord is one")

<sup>36</sup> Historically there have been divine trinities all over the world. A common example is The 'Trimurti'. A divine Hindu trilogy. The 'Trimurti' comprises Brahma, the father and creator, Vishnu, the Son and preserver, and Siva, the holy spirit and destroyer, 'In those three persons the one God was shown/Each first in place, each last not one alone/ of Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, each may be/First second third among the Blessed Three.'

A Catholic missionary named Father Joseph de Acosta, whilst on a exploration trip in Peru in 1610, said 'It is strange that that devil ... brought a trinity into idolatry' on finding a Peruvian tribe worshipping Churunti, Apomti and Intiquaoqui as one God.

(Page 203 God By Andrew Waugh)

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**O People of the Book! Do not commit excesses in your religion, or say of Allaah that which is not true. The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allaah... Do not say "Trinity" Desist! It will be better for you, Allaah is one: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth.**

{Qu'ran (4):171}

Saul of Tarsus is regarded as the founder of Christianity because of his immense influence. The New Testament consists of 27 books, 15 of these books are associated with Saul. The Gospel of Mark appears to be influenced by Saul and the Epistle of James gives the impression of a reaction to the teachings of Saul. He is also responsible from shifting the focus from teachings of Jesus towards Jesus' nature.<sup>37</sup> He taught that Jesus' death and resurrection was of the utmost importance and marginalized adherence to the Mosaic Law.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Christendom has done away with Christianity without being quite aware of it." (Soren Kierkegaard, cited in Time magazine, Dec. 16, 1946, p. 64)

<sup>38</sup> Saul thought Jesus' alleged crucifixion signified that Jesus was cursed (according to an Old Testament passage: '**cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree'**). However, since Saul believed Jesus' resurrection indicated that God has blessed him rather than cursed him. He was confounded with the question of 'why did Jesus bear the curse?' He rationalized that the curse was not a result of Jesus' own actions; rather, he suffered the curse for others. Therefore, Jesus' crucifixion must have been a sacrifice for the sins of others. Saul continued to reason that our sins could only be removed by the

Saul's teachings mystified the Godhead to the extent that it took several centuries to develop a solid linguistic and philosophical understanding<sup>39</sup>.

He was the foremost propagator of Christianity to the non - Jewish polytheists of the Roman Empire.

Christianity also has suffered from the amalgamation of previously held polytheistic beliefs. Syncretism was a hallmark of the Hellenistic world. The exchange and borrowing of ideas and rituals between religious groups was commonplace. Christianity inherited this tradition. The influence of Greek thought<sup>40</sup> and various mystery religions were paramount to the formation of Christianity. Edward Gibbon's wrote in the preface to *History of Christianity*

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acknowledgement of Jesus' sacrifice. Consequently, the importance given to Jesus' death and resurrection marginalised the observance of Mosaic Law. Refer to Bart Ehrman's *Teaching company: Paul; Man, Mission and Modus Operandi*

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, stated in reference to the trinity "**Why on earth do we talk about God in such a convoluted way.**" (*Theology* Alistair E Macgrath)

The clarity and purity of Islamic monotheism sets it apart from all other religious traditions

**'No religion has interpreted monotheism in a more consequential and literal way than Islam'**

(Encyclopedia Britannica)

**"The lands in which Christianity originated (Palestine, Syria, Egypt and North Africa) were subsequently lost. The excessive complications of the dogmas of Christology and the Trinity, and the inner divisions of Christianity by the comparison with the simplicity of the Islamic confession of faith (the one God and His prophet) and the initial cohesion essentially contributed to the downfall (of Christianity)."**

(Hans Kung, *The Catholic Church* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2002) p.75)

<sup>40</sup> The theme of Greek tragedy is an integral part of the biblical narrative. Ancient Greek tragedy involved a honorable character of noble birth who made a tragic mistake which in turn lead to his demise. Another theme of Greek tragedy, which is similar to many themes in the bible, is a noble character's desperate clash with a higher power usually the 'gods'. According to Aristotle (384 BC –322 BC) Greek tragedy gave the audience 'cartharsis' (emotional purgation), which explains its wide appeal.

**“If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism...Many of the pagan tenets, invented by the Egyptians and idealised by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief.”**

### **The Deification of Al-Lat<sup>41</sup>**

Al-Lat was a widely respected man from the Thaqeef clan. He was renowned for his generous nature. He was predominantly known for preparing gruel for the pilgrims, near a prominent rock in Ta`if. Subsequent to his death, members of his community erected a tomb at his gravesite near the great rock of Ta`if. They would attend his burial place for long periods. This area was eventually consecrated.

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<sup>41</sup> Al Laat was a god previously worshipped by the Arabs before the advent of Islam.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Graven Images**

**“There is none co - equal or comparable unto Him.”**

(Qur'an 4:112)

## **Anthropomorphic Representations of God**

Religious iconography is common amongst most religions. Religious imagery is based on the desire to merge the material with the immaterial so the abstract becomes touchable and tangible. This misleading notion caused humanity to create deities.

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**"You do not worship (anything) besides Allaah except (mere) names which you and your fathers gave titles to, in which Allaah didn't send down any authority; the command is solely for Allaah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the upright religion."**

{Qur'an (12):40}

The creation of deities is rooted in the word '**idol**', which is derived from the original Greek '**eidos**' which means '**to form/shape**'.

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**"Do you worship that which you (yourselves) carve? Whilst Allaah has created you and what you make!"**

{Qur'an (37): 96}

Xenophanes of Colophon<sup>42</sup> (570 BCE – 450 BCE) said, concerning anthropomorphic representations of God,

**“Men make gods in their own image... If horses or oxen or lions had hands and could produce works of art, they too would represent the gods after their own fashion.”**

Created deities are often cultural personifications, which bear a remarkable resemblance to the community that created them. An amusing example of this is found in Hans Belting's *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image before the Era of Art*<sup>43</sup>; in 1438 the Greek Patriarch Gregory Melissinos said,

**“When I enter a Latin Church, I can pray to none of the saints depicted there because I do not recognise none of them. Although I do recognize Christ, I cannot recognise the manner in which he is being depicted.”**

The images of Jesus in Europe portray him with typically European features whereas The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church depicts him with African features<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Xenophanes of Colophon was a Greek social and religious critic. Xenophanes differed significantly from his contemporaries. He rejected the idea that the a god would resemble humans in ‘body or thought’. He advocated the belief in the ‘greatest God’ who was abstract, unchangeable and universal.

<sup>43</sup> University of Chicago Press: 1994

<sup>44</sup> No detailed physical descriptions of Jesus are contained in any of the canonical Gospels. However, his imagery is widespread. The more familiar, bearded Jesus figure became dominant. Egyptologist John Romer, in *Seven Wonders of the World*, has pointed out the portrayal of Jesus is very similar to the surviving portrayals of Zeus or Jupiter

## **The Absence of Anthropomorphic Representations of God**

The concept of God is the most abstract thought, which occurs in the human mind therefore Islam, is completely devoid of anthropomorphic representations of Allah<sup>45</sup>. Titus Burckhardt (1908 – 1984) wrote,

**“Islam is centered on Unity, and Unity is not expressible in terms of any image... Nothing must stand between man and the invisible presence of God - thus eliminating all the turmoil and passionate suggestions of the world and in their stead creating an order that expresses equilibrium, serenity and peace.”**

**“There is none co - equal or comparable unto Him.”**  
(Qur'an 4:112)

Allaah is far too lofty and exalted to be contained within the confines of a statue or the borders of a painting. Therefore, all representations of God are unbefitting<sup>46</sup>.

The production of religious images is cognate with the deification process. Ibn – ul - Qaiyim (1292 C.E. - 1350 C.E) said, in *Ighathatul - Lahfan*, **“Noah’s people were led to idolatry because they aggrandised their dead by sculpturing their images. Such is the case with most idolaters.”** The veneration of images replaces ones adoration

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<sup>45</sup> The star and crescent is often regarded as a symbol of Islam. However, the crescent moon and star symbol actually pre - dates Islam by several thousand years, these ancient celestial symbols were in use by the peoples of Central Asia and Siberia, in their worship of celestial bodies. The Christians of Constantinople later used the symbol until it was the invading Ottoman Turks conquered the city in 1453, thus the Ottomans adopted the city's existing flag and symbol.

<sup>46</sup> Particularly the Tantras and Purana's (sects within Hinduism) depiction of their deity, who is represented as a 'Lingam'. A Lingam is an Idol shaped in the form of an erect penis.

of an imageless creator, which in turn leads to the adoration of a material object.

### **Examples of the Aniconism**

Numerous religious traditions have also been completely devoid of anthropomorphic representations of God. Karen Armstrong in *A History of God from Abraham to the Present; The 4000 - year quest for God*<sup>47</sup> writes about certain tribes in Africa, “**They yearn towards God in prayer; believe that He is watching over them and will punish wrong doing. Yet He is strangely absent from their daily lives. He has no special cult and is never depicted in effigy. The "High God" is not given material shape. The tribesmen say that He is inexpressible and cannot be contaminated by the world of men.**” Shangdi literally translated ‘above sovereign’, ‘above’, or ‘Lord on high’. Shangdi is the name used in traditional Chinese society for the supreme deity. He acknowledged as the creator and the Supreme Guide of both the natural order and the human order. He is never represented with either images or idols. The first anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha himself are often considered a result of the Greco-Buddhist interaction<sup>48</sup>. Before this innovation, Buddhist art was aniconic. This reluctance towards anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha, seem to be connected to one of the Buddha’s sayings, reported in the Digha Nikaya, which discouraged representations of him. Despite this injunction, Greek sculptures were the first to attempt a sculptural representation of the Buddha. Between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Greco-Buddhism heavily influenced the artistic development of Buddhism. Tactius<sup>49</sup> wrote in *De Origine Et*

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<sup>47</sup> Vintage: 1999

<sup>48</sup> **Greco-Buddhism** is the cultural syncretism between the culture of Classical Greece and Buddhism

<sup>49</sup> Publius (or: Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus (c. 56 – c. 117) is one of the most important historians of Roman Antiquity

*Situ Germanorum Liber* regarding certain ancient Germanic tribes, "**They don't consider it mighty enough for the Heavens to depict Gods on walls or to display them in some human shape.**" The Byzantine Emperor Leo III<sup>50</sup> (685 - 741) ordered the removal of an image of Jesus prominently placed over the palace gate of Constantinople. Leo III described image exaltation as 'a craft of idolatry'. He apparently forbade the worship of religious images in a 730 edict. This highly controversial decision caused a great schism within the church. During this period of great turmoil, Saint Germanos I the patriarch of Constantinople wrote several letters about this incident. Surprisingly, these letters contains little theological rebuttals against Leo III's removal of images, instead Saint Germanos I was worried about the Church appearing flawed and misguided and therefore 'playing in to the hands of the Jews and Muslims'<sup>51</sup> The Protestant Reformation was a movement in the 16th century, to reform the Catholic Church in Western Europe. Some Protestant reformers, in particular John Calvin (1509 - 1564)<sup>52</sup> encouraged the destruction of religious images by invoking the Biblical prohibition; "**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image** (Ne Facies tibi sculptile), **or any likeness** (similitudinem) **of any thing that is in heaven above, or that**

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<sup>50</sup> Leo III the Isaurian or the Syrian) was a Byzantine emperor from 717 until his death in 741

<sup>51</sup> Patricia Karlin-Hayter, *The Oxford History of Byzantium: Iconoclasm* (Oxford University Press, 2002)

<sup>52</sup> Alister McGrath states in *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (Galilee Book, 2006), "**It has often been pointed out that John Calvin's views on the manner in which buildings should be decorated resonate with those of Islam. No portrayals of God in human form were to be permitted within churches. It was, as Calvin suggested, all too easy for something created to be confused with the creator. It was to open the way to idolatry, 'to imagine or possess something in which to put one's trust in place of or in addition to the one true God who has revealed himself in his word.'** For Calvin, the point is not simply that God should not be pictured; it is that God is intrinsically incapable of being pictured."

**is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.** (Exodus 20:4)

## **Chapter 4**

**Homo Homini Deus Est!  
(Man is a God to Himself!)**

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**Were you created by nothing or did  
you create yourselves?  
(Qur'an 52:35)**

## The Origins of Atheism

Atheism increased in prominence during the eighteenth century. However, its origins can be traced back to the dawn of Western civilization.

The starting point commenced with Homer's<sup>53</sup> great epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, composed in the ninth century BCE. These epic tales were told in such a compelling way, that they have become part of the inherited learning tradition of the West. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* give details about the Trojan War and its aftermath; however, its gripping narrative ridiculed and undermined the gods of Olympus. For Homer these gods were corrupt, vain and self – serving. The gods are immortal humans, demonstrating and engaging in the same emotions, vices, and power gains as their human counterparts. Homer often refers to their divine activities humorously, suggesting they are not to be taken seriously.<sup>54</sup>

Centuries later, Lucretius<sup>55</sup> referring to various examples from the *Iliad* argued that religion merely evoked terror whilst atheism eliminated such terror, and allows humanity to focus on the natural forces and processes at work around us. However, Atheism failed to make an impact until the early modern period.

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<sup>53</sup> Homer was a legendary early Greek poet and rhapsode traditionally credited with the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, commonly assumed to have lived in the 8th century BC.

<sup>54</sup>The Greek social critic Xenophanes condemned Homer's epic. He stated, "**Homer and Hesiod has attributed to the gods all sorts of things that are matters of reproach and censure among men; theft, adultery and mutual deception as they sang of numerous illicit divine deeds.**"

<sup>55</sup> Titus Lucretius Carus (94 BC - 49 BC) was a Roman poet and philosopher.

## Sowing the Seeds

The foundation of modern atheism is primarily based on an extended criticism of the Christianity rather than the attractions of a godless world.

Ironically, an intensely religious movement planted the seeds that enabled atheism to take root. The Protestant Reformation was a movement in the sixteenth century that changed the shape of Western European culture. A unique feature of the Protestant Reformation was the separation of the sacred from the worldly. Prior to the reformation, Roman Catholic Europeans believed the sacred was intertwined with the worldly. All aspects of daily life were part of the divine order such as commerce<sup>56</sup>, feast days, social structure, and agriculture. However, Protestantism secularised Roman Catholicism. This widening of the gulf between the sacred and the secular led to an adverse effect upon the European mind. The Protestant Reformation's distinction of the sacred and the secular is widely thought to have contributed to the rise of the natural sciences. The separation enabled scientists to investigate the natural world with no religious obstacles. The world increasingly became seen as a machine or instrument of divine origins, but increasingly distant from God. Hugo Grotius (1583 – 1645) the famous Dutch Protestant lawyer

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<sup>56</sup>In terms of commerce, influential protestant reformers declared usury (interest) completely permissible, whereas historically Roman Catholicism had outlawed such practices. St. Thomas Aquinas, a leading theologian of the Catholic Church, argued charging of interest is wrong because it amounts to 'double charging', charging for both the thing and the use of the thing. It is also to sell time since the usurer charges, in effect, for the time that the money is in the hands of the borrower. Time, however, is not a commodity that any man can sell. The epic poem of Dante placed usurers in the inner ring of the seventh circle of hell. Max Weber and Richard Tawney stated that Protestantism's allowance of usury set the stage for capitalism.

Islam prohibits all forms of usury lending or receiving. It is an unjust human invention which impoverishes and enslaves the majority and enriches the very few beyond their needs.

Mestrius Plutarchus. Thomas Aquinas, Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Porcius Cato, Marcus Tullius Cicero and Lucius Annaeus Seneca have all have denounced usury.

pointed out, the result of the Reformation was a creation of a world in which ‘**etsi Deus non daretur**’ (As if God did not exist). This outlook led many to pragmatic atheism ‘we will live as if there is no God’ to an ontological atheism ‘there is no God’.

Another aspect of the Reformation was Protestantism’s prohibition of saint veneration, religious imagery, and the elaborate Roman Catholic rituals. The mystical and decorative nature of Christianity was gradually eradicated from European life. “**There is a linguistic connection between the three words ‘myth’, ‘mysticism’ and ‘mystery’. All are derived from the Greek verb ‘musteion’; ‘to close ones eyes’**<sup>57</sup>. The absence of mystique ‘opened the eyes’ of the Europeans and they eventually began to see how absurd Christianity really was<sup>58</sup>

Despite these rumblings, the belief in God was publicly unquestioned in seventeenth century Europe. However, by the turn of the eighteenth century the power, influence, and immorality of the church was increasingly seen as a scandalous matter, which required urgent action. Throughout this period of turmoil, the church’s authority was undermined by various prolific writings on the absurdity of Christianity. Established truths were now openly questioned and a skeptical<sup>59</sup> materialist worldview emerged.

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<sup>57</sup> Armstrong, *Chapter: 7 ‘The God of the Mystics’* in *The History of God*

<sup>58</sup> The historical absence of ‘hocus pocus’ in Islam with its dramatic growth is a testament to its divine origin. A natural religion which has substance has no need for religious imagery and elaborate rituals.

<sup>59</sup> The word ‘Skeptic’ is derived from the Greek work ‘Skeptikos’. ‘Skeptikoi’ were members of an ancient Greek school that doubted the possibility of real knowledge of any kind. The Greek philosopher Pyrrho who lived around 365-360 BC until around 275-270 BC founded this school of thought. Pyrrho travelled with Alexander the Great on his exploration of the east, and studied in India under the Gymnosophists and and under the Magi in Persia.. Pyrrho taught that nothing could be known, because the contradictory of every statement can be maintained with equal plausibility.

## Scientific Atheism

During the early stages of atheistic thought. Atheism sought legitimisation by aligning itself with the natural sciences. Before this alignment, atheism was widely thought of as a peculiar type of philosophy.

Atheist writers used the natural sciences as a vehicle to substantiate their claims. They now asserted that science proves things, it establishes its theories with total certainty, whatever science cannot prove with certainty should be disregarded.

It is certainly true that the natural sciences aim to give the best possible explanation of the world, and that they have had considerable successes in doing so. However, there are limits to this. The scientist regularly has to propose certain ideas that certainly seem to fit in to a reasonable paradigm, but they cannot be proven so they have to be accepted on faith alone. Charles Darwin in his *Origin of Species* (1859) points out that his theory has not been proven, and that all kinds of objections could be reasonably raised against it<sup>60</sup>. Nevertheless, he still believed his theory to be true.

The history of science shows a steady progression from one theory that was believed to be right in its day only to be replaced by another more plausible theory, for example the theory of light. Natural scientists find themselves having to

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<sup>60</sup> In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution<sup>60</sup> caused a massive crisis of faith. The theory originally proposed in Darwin's *Origin of Species* was the Western world's biggest thrust towards atheism

Charles Darwin is often presented as an atheist but is best regarded as an agnostic. A close reading of Darwin's writings shows that the main reason for his doubts about the Christian concept of God had little to do with his theory of evolution. Rather it was his visceral distaste for the concept of eternal punishment for nonbelievers. In addition, the tragic death of his daughter wrecked his belief in divine providence. This theory has not yet been proven. The formation of a new species by the accumulation of mutations has never been demonstrated in real life or under laboratory conditions

believe in theories that they know will at sometime be proven wrong, but not being sure of *which* of their present beliefs will be proven wrong.

Scientific proof is something rather weaker such as ‘good reason for believing that something is right’ while knowing it could not actually be proven right. There will always be an element of faith within the natural sciences because so much cannot be proven.

The natural sciences are incapable of disproving God’s existence. Stephen J Gould<sup>61</sup> (1941 – 2002) said, “**To say it for all my colleagues and for the umpteenth million time; science simply cannot adjudicate the issue of God’s possible superintendence of nature. We neither affirm nor deny it; we simply can’t comment on it as scientists.**”

**“They follow nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire. Even though there has already come to them Guidance from their Lord.”**

(Qur'an 53:23)

**“They say ‘What is there but our life in this world? We die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us.’ But of that they have no (firm) knowledge, they merely assume.”**

(Qur'an 45:24)

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<sup>61</sup> The most influential and widely read writer of popular science

## **The Promethean Liberator**

From now on Atheism was regarded as a rebellion against the sexual, moral, and social restrictions of the time. It was looked upon as 'The Promethean Liberator'

In Greek mythology, Prometheus held no awe for the gods, and he ridiculed Zeus. He was responsible for stealing fire from the gods so that humanity would benefit from its warmth. Humanity had been constrained and was powerless to change their condition. Without fire, humanity could not create tools that would allow it to assert its control over the world. By stealing the fire of the gods, Prometheus had empowered humanity by providing it with 'enlightenment', enabling it to achieve its own destiny on its own terms. Atheism saw Prometheus as a figure of liberation, pointing to the need and ability for humankind to break free from the repressive stranglehold of the gods and achieve its own destiny

However there is a second part to this Greek myth, carelessly overlooked by the 'enlightened'. The gods retaliated when Prometheus stole the fire and gave it to humanity. Zeus sent Pandora to Prometheus's brother, Epimetheus, bearing a jar she was instructed not to open. Pandora could not resist the temptation and opened the jar, unleashing various calamities to escape and invade the world. The suggestion of this myth is that humanity's attempt to possess absolute autonomy would produce unforeseen disastrous consequences.

Atheism presented itself as a liberator enabling humanity to step outside of the arbitrary limits placed upon it by religion. Yet the elimination of God led to new heights of moral brutality and political violence. The opening of Pandora's jar led to the creation of Nazism and Communism. Of the many criticisms aimed at religion is that religion is the root cause of cruelty, oppression and violence. Yet the history of atheism contains numerous acts of wide scale cruelty, oppression, and violence. Communism alone is estimated to have caused the

deaths of 85 – 100 million people. The religion of humanity was seen as a peaceful alternative to the religion of a deity, yet it is humanity who is responsible for many of society’s ills.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> The twentieth century witnessed much discussion about how the existence of God could be coupled with immense suffering and evil present in the world. Philosopher William Alston (born 1921) stated that a consensus had been reached among the philosophers, regarding any argument, which attempts to show that evil is logically incompatible with the existence of God is completely bankrupt.

The Atheist presupposes that God does not have morally sufficient reasons to permit evil<sup>62</sup>. However, humanity has limited scope to presume such an overconfident assumption, since we are finite beings; we are limited in time, space, and foresight.. Evils, which appear to be utterly pointless, may indeed be part of a greater plan or not at all evil. An example of this is the chaos theory. Scientists have discovered that certain macroscopic systems are radically unstable due to the smallest perturbations. The flutter of a butterfly’s wings in South Africa could set in motions forces that would eventually result in the occurrence of a hurricane over the Atlantic Ocean. Due humankind’s limited foresight, our observation of a particular butterfly fluttering about, could never predict that this obscure action would result in to a full - scale hurricane.

**May Allah guide us all to the straight path**

All the good found within this small booklet is from Allah and  
all the errors are from myself and/or Satan